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WITH THE SPRINGBOKS IN EGYPT

With the Springboks in Egypt

BY "CAPTAIN"

*A brief description of the
work of the 1st South
African Infantry
Brigade on the Western
Frontier of Egypt*

HODDER AND STOUGHTON
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Preface

CAPTAIN MILLER, the Author of this book, was killed in France on July 16th this year.

He had served through the Boer War until its close in 1902. After being in the South African Railway Offices for some time he joined the staff of *The Friend* newspaper in Bloemfontein. He also acted for many years as Hon. Secretary for the Rugby Union of the Orange Free State.

He served in the campaign in South-West Africa, and then joined the 1st S.A. Infantry, with whom he fought in Egypt, and afterwards in France.

I knew him for several years while he was in Bloemfontein, where he was a member of the Cathedral choir ; and I married him in Kimberley a short time after he joined the forces.

Last May he asked me to make arrangements about his account of the Egyptian campaign. The publishers have asked me to write a few words by way of Preface, and I do so gladly as a tribute to the memory of a good Churchman, a good friend, and a good soldier.

Requiescat in pace.

ALFRED DAVENPORT KELLY.

SOCIETY OF THE SACRED MISSION,

KELHAM, NEWARK.

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OUR voyage occupied eight days. We made Malta about 9 a.m. Rather an interesting place, and strongly fortified, with several French battleships and British destroyers in the harbour. An opportunity to go ashore was given, of which full advantage was taken. Our voyage had been most uninteresting, the more so as room anywhere had been at a premium. The men have to get through their meals in four sittings, the officers in two. We are consequently eating all day. There has been no opportunity for exercise of any kind—the rest can be imagined. I have always contended that

any kind of trip in a trooper is detrimental physically and morally, and I see no reason to change that view now. An endeavour has been made to keep the men busy, and that is about all. Duties are heavy—it almost takes the whole battalion to carry them out for a day. Guards on gangways, boat guards, submarine guards, and a plentitude of other guards, help to keep the men employed ; it is all a very poor substitute for land routine.

The chief bugbear with the ship's authorities has of course been the submarines. It was stated this morning by "somebody who knew" that during our progress from Devonport to Malta we had been chased three times. Our course varied considerably in the daytime. Sometimes the compass said we were going South.

An hour later it would show a Northerly direction. These indications were varied by N.N.E. or E. or N.E. Apparently we were imitating the sea-serpent by insisting on a snakelike or spiral and zig-zag course. We got news *en route* to the effect that three transports had been sunk in the Mediterranean a couple of days before we had entered those treacherous waters. It was not a pleasant prospect. Still, one can die but once, although most of us prefer a death on common ground. We have been ordered to wear our life-belts at all times except when eating and sleeping. When eating, the life-belt must be under your chair and when sleeping close at hand.

Before leaving Malta all officers of the S.A. Infantry Brigade were introduced to Lady

Methuen, whose husband has the Mediterranean command. She was indeed a gracious and charming lady. Something kind and sympathetic was conveyed by word, and gesture, or look to each individual with whom she shook hands. "I am so very sorry indeed, gentlemen," she said to the officers of the 1st Regiment, "that my husband is unable to come and see you off. Both he and I are so very keen and fond of South Africa, and we shall both watch your doings with the liveliest interest. I know that your deeds will be just glorious." It was a charming and inspiring valedictory message. As Lady Methuen left the transport she was heartily cheered by the whole brigade, which had lined the decks. The South African war cry followed.

And now we are off. We have no escort, and

our most trying time is, according to all accounts, ahead. Our padre maintains that he is absolutely certain no harm will come to us on this trip. So that is cheering. However, we shall see. At present we are ploughing a furrow.

The boat is listing somewhat to starboard. The night is dark and misty. Malta has been left far behind and we are now in the direct route for our destination.

AFTER all, it had not been decreed that the first S.A. Infantry Brigade should brave the dangers of the deep without an escort.

When daylight broke T.B.D. No. — was on our port side. Throughout the day she was keenly watched by thousands of interested eyes. She gambolled and pranced, raced madly to and fro, now on our port and now on our star-board side. Sometimes she was quite close in. All of a sudden something would attract her attention. She would proudly toss her head, look in the suspected direction, make a sudden

turn at a tangent, and peel off as fast as she could lick. Having arrived at her destination she would once more head for the east, look depreciatingly but watchfully at her huge and lumbering consort, and then gradually settle down to the regulation pace of about fifteen knots per hour. Not for long, however; soon she would spurt off in another direction on the prowl for submarines. She would swagger while cutting fancy figures in front of her plodding companion. She would wriggle and roll, gambol and leap. She seemed to be in half a dozen places at once. Her presence was the topic of the day. Everybody felt safer, and the overhanging dread of submarines almost vanished. Her presence was just as salutary and encouraging as a preponderance of big guns on our side in a

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big engagement on land. At first there had been some doubts as to the genuineness of No. —'s breed. Her name had not been spotted and her ensign could not be distinguished.

"I hope she is not French," drawled the young subaltern, who knew less about military matters than he knew about those of the sister service.

But no, she was real British, and even the "one pip" officer smiled graciously.

During the afternoon we spotted three peculiar craft ahead. One looked suspiciously like a submarine. No. — at once took up a threatening attitude, and as we drew nearer she seemed to be still on the *qui vive*. Some signalling took place, with the result, a blank

to the lay mind. Two of the wayfarers, however, took on the shape of patrol boats or trawlers. The third still looked like a submarine with her wireless ready for action. She appeared to be towed by one of the other two.

Speculation was rife as to her indentity and not a few hot arguments resulted. All of a sudden No. — turned sharply to the right, and was off at a brisk pace towards the trio on our right. She fairly leapt over the water, making a wide detour in the rear of the presumed submarine. Gradually it was overhauled, with sleuth-like precision. A careful inspection was made, and away galloped No. — to join her charge once again.

Was it a submarine or was it not ? (the former being, of course, the most desirable theory).

One cannot wonder that the fact quickly became an established one that it was a submarine of the very latest pattern.

One more day and Alexandria will be reached. Then once more on solid ground with lots of work beckoning to us from afar. England, with its blasphemous winter climate, an almost forgotten memory. Back once more to the desert, its trials and its lean and dreary days.

Sunday on a crowded transport is, if anything, more tedious than any other day in the week. A semblance of holiness is given to this day of rest by Divine Service. As a rule, these are compulsory. In our case compulsion was out of the question, for the simple reason that there was no room anywhere to hold

Divine Service. A Celebration was provided in the smoking saloon at 7 a.m., and voluntary services in the dining saloon at 10 a.m. and 8.45 p.m. Considering the number of troops on board, these services were not well attended.

The ship's inspection takes place on Sundays, so the men who are not on duty have a few more hours in which they can loaf in grand discomfort. The lot of the man in the ranks on a trooper is not an enviable one. He has precious few compensations of any kind and his discomforts are legion. Especially is it hard on the man who has been used to a good home and the provisions of a competent income. Lots of our men belong to that class. Still they do not complain, but prove themselves real philosophers

and swallow many an indignity and hardship with a merry laugh or a happy joke.

The worst part of active service is seldom the fighting. It is the slow, uninteresting, and wearisome daily grind which demands all your fortitude and mental reservation. It is a big strain, and one cannot wonder if, at times, the sorely tried spirit rebels and casts care to the winds. Still there is only one more day now before we reach Alexandria.

The sight of land will be welcome. The sun will pour a radiant glow over everything. South Africa will stand riveted in the memories hitherto obscured by rain, fog, cold, sleet, and snow. The blue sea and limpid sky of the East will bring back the cheerfulness and brightness of the land we left some few months ago, and will

cheer us for the work ahead, as England in winter time could never have done.

Our little destroyer escort left us this afternoon. She turned back and scudded off as if she had sighted something very interesting on the far horizon. The bluejackets waved us a cheery *bon voyage*, and received three rousing cheers in return. Her departure left a gap in our monotonous existence, and the sense of security she had imparted vanished like the surf of the sea. But she had handed us over to a small specimen of the gunboat class. She did not look the part she was allotted to play, but, then, appearances are often deceptive; nothing but a battleship or an extra fast cruiser could compensate us for the loss of our No. —.

THERE are many in South Africa who will remember Lord Methuen. Not only for the part he played in the Anglo-Boer War, but also for the interest and care he subsequently took in the settlement of the country and the birth of the present Union Defence Force. His interest in anything South African has not diminished since he left to take over more important work. After we had left Malta the following letter, addressed to the G.O.C. 1st S.A. Infantry Brigade, was read to each company of each regiment in the Brigade. Comment on this

document is needless. It shows that the writer's affectionate sympathy and broad imperial vision have not been changed by the addition of many heavy responsibilities and his advance in years. South Africa still calls him as loudly as it did when it claimed his services :

“ The Poloa, Macha,

“ *January 7th, 1916.*

“ MY DEAR GENERAL,

“ . . . It is not possible for me to express my sorrow at missing the chance of seeing you, and wishing you all ‘ God-speed ’ on your noble quest. South Africa has been a second home to me. Fourteen years of my life have been spent there. . . .

“ I look back, as does Lady Methuen, as the proudest and happiest time of my life. on

giving General Botha and General Smuts a helping hand in the formation of your great Citizen Army—that true bond of union between Englishmen and Dutchmen. We little thought how soon and how splendidly you would be called upon to show its value. You and I, Englishmen and Dutchmen, say, as our ancestors did in olden times, when fighting for freedom against thralldom,

“ ‘ For God and Country.’

“ Your sincere friend,

“ (Signed) METHUEN,

“ F.M.”

WE arrived at Alexandria about 1 p.m. to-day (January 10th, 1916). The day was glorious. A fresh, cool breeze, a cloudless blue sky, and the sea just that delicate blue tint for which the Mediterranean is so famed. It was pleasant to see our goal form into the semblance of a huge city. It was like a transformation scene: first a series of mirage-like sections on the far horizon; gradually these were joined together and formed a low-lying ridge, which bounded the vision. Silhouetted trees, ridges and houses made their appearance, and as we drew nearer still the

hitherto dark and distant scenery all of a sudden sprang into life.

As far as the eye could reach were signs of human enterprise. By land and sea there was incessant activity.

Soon the transport came to anchor alongside several other huge black monsters, anxious to disgorge their teeming and impatient thousands of fighting men. The day was hot, but the troops revelled in the new conditions. Tramways and busy trains were running to and fro. Through a large clump of stately palm trees could be seen a portion of the Nile's overflow, where it emptied itself into a salt lake.

But there was no getting off the boat to-day. The wheels in the military machine move slowest when you want them to revolve quickest.

We had to cool our heels for yet another day. We learnt that the Gallipoli peninsula had been completely evacuated with a loss of small casualties. We read the *Egyptian Gazette* and the *Egyptian Mail*, sold at 2½d. each ; they were both poor specimens of journalistic skill, but found ready purchasers.

At night we had all the lights going on board for the first time since we left England. The harbour was brightly illuminated. The men had an alfresco concert on board, and with the assurance of an early breakfast and a speedy disembarkation on the morrow the trials of the past few weeks were forgotten.

Although everything was ready for our early departure, it was our lot to spend yet another day in appalling inactivity on board our trans-

port. "No landing to-day" was the unwelcome news after breakfast. A little progression landwards was, however, made. During the forenoon we were towed from our resting-place in the harbour to one of the many jetties. There communication with land was established by means of a gangway, and hopes arose once more. Later in the day these were fulfilled beyond expectation. Each company was permitted to go for a short route march. The men were delighted and a speedy disembarkation was made. For about an hour and a half they thoroughly enjoyed the feeling of solid earth under foot.

We marched through what seemed like the dirtiest, smelliest and poorest quarter of Alexandria. The filth was unspeakable and the

odour obnoxious. Squalor and poverty were visible everywhere. Human beings, donkeys, goats, and poultry lived happily together in hovels glorified by the name of dwellings. Ancient Egyptians sat amid all this unwholesomeness smoking their hookah pipes. Women, dressed in the mournful black flowing gowns, squinted inquisitively over their yashmak.

Dilapidated horses drew enormously high-wheeled carts loaded with stones and rubbish. Trams (electric), in which white, black and yellow humanity mixed pleasantly with each other, rushed past the jetty. Smells made one feel queer. Still it was all very interesting. It was Egypt as it always has been, in spite of its modern innovations—Egypt with its children

in fantastic garbs and its customs unchanged by time or Western civilisation.

One could not see much in a brief hour, but one saw enough to desire further investigation and a deeper study of its picturesqueness and national habits.

OUR camp is at Mex. The boat was at last vacated of its human freight by noon to-day. Full marching orders and a six-mile march to the camping place. A hot, close day. Narrow, smelly streets, unceasing traffic, with Eastern and Western civilisation mingling oddly. One could not by any possible means feel impressed with the new surroundings, although it was a relief to be rid of the cage-like captivity of the boat.

Our camp reminded one very much of Maitland, that most gruesome of all civilised

camping grounds. The camp was placed on a narrow tongue of land composed of sand dunes and limey soil. Facing us was an extensive salt lake, its waters sluggish and turbid. At our back was the open sea. Around us were Mohammedan villages, dilapidated and filthy. Camels, goats and sheep were busy filling their attenuated frames from the meagre pastures a sandy and desolate country provided.

Camp space was at a premium, four regiments having to be accommodated on a piece of ground all too small.

Training has commenced once again. Route marching was the order. Full equipment for officers and men, a hot day and a delightfully sandy soil on which to tread. It was really hard going. Our path was uphill and downhill,

in and out among sandy lime hills and glaring lime quarries. The wind was rising and the loose sand was whipped along with ever-increasing force, making your face smart and tingle and clogging up the eyes. All things considered, the men stuck the march well, and few fell out during the two and a half hours' tramp. The strong head wind had developed into a gale when we reached camp. The sea boomed and roared angrily. The tents swayed and strained at their ropes. Sand was being hurled along at forty miles an hour. It penetrated everything and formed drifts wherever shelter was given. It was a real devils' night. Bed was the only solution. Reading was an impossibility as no candle would keep alight. The only thing to do was to crawl into one's flea-bag, tuck the blankets

round the head, and make the silent resolution that, no matter what happened, nothing would compel the evacuation of the chosen place of sleep and rest. When daybreak came the tent was still intact, though in a parlous condition.

So long as one has no worse effects after a boisterous night than a pair of eyes clogged up with sand, there can be no need for complaint.

Heavy rain had fallen during the night. The sky was clear, and there was a wintry snap in the early morning air. The roads were watery and slippery. The limey soil had, by the aid of the rain, been converted into a very presentable substitute for whitewash. Boots, clothes, and equipment were soon plentifully besprinkled.

In and out, along hills, narrow and filthy streets, over sandy and lime quarries, now along flats and again along a huge railway embankment, proceeded the column. Camels, goats, and villainous-looking Arabs passed us continuously. There is plenty of variety for the keen observer in Egypt, but there are many pleasanter aids to observation than a heavy pack, a well-filled haversack and one hundred and twenty rounds of ammunition.

I read to-day F. N. Willis's book called *Anti-Christ in Egypt*. It deals principally with the morality question in Alexandria, Cairo, and Port Said. Some gloomy views are taken by the author. I, for one, am quite prepared to accept everything stated. Some of our young subalterns, on their first visit to Alex-

andria, were enticed to visit one of the many "show places." They went, they saw, and they fled. Disgusting is a mild word to describe what they saw. It was of such a kind they would baffle the most depraved ingenuity of a Western mind. It has been said, and said truly, that "the sins of the civilised West can be described, but the iniquities of the East are unspeakable."

The G.O.C. has placed certain places out of bounds. Leave has been restricted to the lowest possible minimum, and none is to be granted at night except in very special cases. The padres of the brigade are doing their utmost to provide entertainments in Camp, so as to keep the men away from temptation. The hidden plague is rife in almost every Egyptian

town, where it exists in its most poisonous and virulent form.

“ I have done all I could do,” said a General ;
“ the safety of the men now depends upon the straight speaking and advice of the Platoon Commanders, and the common sense of the men themselves.” Luckily we have good officers and a stamp of man who does not lack intelligence, education, or common sense.

I SAW a village to-day bathed in luxuriant sunshine, set out in relief by the blue Mediterranean Sea, and surrounded by a cloudless sky of deep indigo blue. Its dwellings were half ruined, but picturesque. No doubt its streets and alleys were reeking with filth and various odours, but, from afar, it looked mystical, romantic, and enticing. In its centre towered a tall spire, surmounted by the crescent. Its dainty and slender architecture was accentuated by the chaste colouring of the windows ; platforms and terraces encircled it at various stages. The village seemed lifeless. Every

house had its shutters and doors closely boarded. The palm trees on the outskirts nodded dreamily in the warm morning air. A long line of camels glided snake-like along, and were swallowed up in one of the many labyrinth-like thoroughfares.

On the left two large eight-winged windmills with heavily built stone foundations. The sails ploughed their way through the delicious atmosphere. With the exception of a few children, clad in the gaudy but becoming native dress, all was as quiet as the grave.

Far away on the flat top of a large house, there was a movement of life and colour. A woman in black flowing robes, with her yashmak covering her face, looked furtively round. She was followed by a young handsome Egyptian or

Turk. The two engaged in earnest conversation. The man drew closer to the woman, who hung her head and seemed hesitating what to do. All of a sudden she dropped her yashmak. The man looked longingly into her face, which was of rare beauty. He clasped her to his breast, and his lips sought hers in a long and passionate kiss.

Suddenly the lovers were interrupted, for some kind of alarm dispelled their ecstasy. She hastily adjusted her face covering, and disappeared with a frightened look towards her lover. He made a hasty survey of the steepness of the wall surrounding his trysting-place. Finding an accessible point, he swung himself over the parapet and in a moment was lost to view.

ROMANCE and mystery mix with squalor and filth wherever you go. This important seaport of the Mediterranean has its noble as well as its sordid aspect. Its ancient native quarters join up importantly with modern civilisation of the most approved standard. It possesses electric trams, a stately Bourse, gorgeous mansions and broad thoroughfares. But you never really get away from the dinginess and squalor of the children of the land.

Abutting on broad streets are evil-smelling, dark and filthy alleyways—in comparison with

which the worst slums of London are models of hygiene and decency.

Alexandria has its places of interest. There is Pompey's Pillar, a huge column made of five enormous pieces of granite, flanked on one side by two implacable sphinxes. At its foot are some catacombs. They are supposed to date back 2,000 years B.C. Your guide will show you dark subterranean passages, reaching far under the colossal pillar towering overhead, the final resting places of Romans and Egyptians. He will show you niches where mummies of ancient Egyptian royalty have been found. Places will be pointed out where once rested the bodies of noble Roman families in their family vault. You grope along stuffy passages, step gingerly along rough steps cut in the sandy soil. Here

the sacred bull was buried. There was the resting place of two children. This is where the ancients put their lamps by the tombs of their loved ones. Unfortunately your guide cannot speak English, and as guide-books are not obtainable in Alexandria you miss a lot of information, truthful and otherwise. But the catacombs by Pompey's Pillar are as nothing compared with those specially guarded by the municipality. To reach these you drive through one of the most interesting parts of Alexandria. The ancient and the modern here join each other at every turn. At one moment you find yourself in a quarter wholly European; the next you are plunged into the midst of people and customs as ancient as those described in the Bible.

This is indeed a land of remarkable contrasts. Whilst in other parts of the world science and civilisation have revolutionised everything, here you find, as of old, the natives pursuing their vocations unhampered by a civilisation which elsewhere uplifts and advances its people in the march of progress and social perfection.

The great catacombs, which now form part of an up-to-date municipal enterprise, lose a great deal of their charm by the introduction of modern methods. You walk through a turnstile, and a municipal official, an Egyptian, cicerones you into a well-cemented enclosure, at the end of which is a large glass dome. By its side are placed several specimens of Roman and Egyptian sculpture and architecture, excavated probably in the process of making the catacombs a lasting

relic. Your guide ushers you down a deep winding staircase, made of solid cement. You enter the bowels of the earth, but your path is lighted by electricity, which is turned on at various points.

These catacombs are well preserved. The galleries have been boarded and are thoroughly lighted. Each sarcophagus and burial place is in a high state of preservation. You are shown the final resting places of kings, queens and the sacred bull; the words of the guide are substantiated by the symbols hewn in the hard granite covers and tablets which surmount the burial places. Skulls, bones and remains of humans and animals, thousands of years old, are pointed out to you. Again the need of an intelligent guide or a reliable guide-book is felt.

Your guide tries to convey to you by signs and a mixture of Arabic and English what he considers you ought to know. You take it all for granted, and try to look interested, but somehow the charm of ancient reverence has departed. The electric lights offend you. The up-to-dateness of the whole thing is distasteful; it is all too much like a common peep-show. Your guide summons you to a huge granite vault. A hole has been pierced in its lid. He invites you to peep, and manages to convey that here a queen was buried a matter of 4,000 years ago. You look, and find that the whole of the interior of the vault is illumined by electric globes. At the bottom you see a large pool of water, and in it is floating a collection of human bones.

Your guide excitedly conveys to you that

those bones are the bones of Her Majesty, long since deceased. You look sceptical, and he insists with increased vehemence. This is the climax of the round, and no doubt your guide regrets his inability to impress you sufficiently, as he will not, in all probability, get a correspondingly large amount of baksheesh. A few more points of interest are shown, and with a low obeisance your dusky attendant salutes you humbly, and mutters, "That is all." You give him the necessary recompense, and with a sigh of relief leave the catacombs, glad to be rid of the rapidly increasing sense of disgust and resentment which they caused you.

Back through the smelly and foul streets once more with their eternal load of stolid Orientals, emaciated animals, filthy children and

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black-robed females. All of a sudden an Egyptian policeman stopped further progress of our vehicle. He got hold of the horse's head and led him forcibly up one of the narrow and foul alleyways which disgorged vile odours of a motley humanity into the main street.

“What the blazes are you up to, you black devil?” I roared. “How dare you interfere?” The official spoken to came up, saluted, and said plaintively, “Sar, yes, my officer. See officer.” “What have I got to do with your infernal officer?” said I angrily. “Drive on, cabby, and be sharp about it!” But the Jehu only smiled indulgently, pointed ahead, and clucked, “Officer, officer.”

A crowd had gathered round, and the street was full of an ever-eddyng mass of gaudily

clad heathens. In the middle of the street a procession had been drawn up. On either side, facing inwards, were eight Egyptian policemen ; all were gesticulating and pointing to our cab. A mounted policeman was spluttering Arabic or Egyptian at the rate of five hundred words a minute at our driver, who beamed apologetically on his fares. Behind the guardians of the peace was a large crowd of what at first seemed to be bandits or cut-throats of the finest blend. Gradually they merged themselves into sections of fours.

On the far side of the pavement was a large crowd of women in their black robes and hoods with their faces covered, anxious to know what was taking place.

I tackled the policeman again. "What is

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happening to your officer ?” said I ; “ is he going to get married ? Is there a raid, or a row ? ”

He looked at me pathetically and pointed excitedly at something which was being carried out of a house. It was a bier, very much like a large four-poster bed, covered with white and red striped canvas. In front of it was placed a fez.

“ Oh, it’s a funeral ! ” said I. “ Your officer is dead, is to be buried ? ”

“ Yes, sar, great officer dead,” came the obliging reply.

The procession moved off, headed by the men on horseback.

One of the mourners, an old villainous-looking Egyptian, evidently chief mourner, wept loudly and wrung his hands distractedly. Several others

of the mourners tried to follow his example, but were hardly so successful. The women set up a plaintive and sustained wail, which somehow had the effect of chasing away all levity one might have felt.

The procession disappeared round the corner and the street once more settled down to its life of indolence and indifference.

We visited the gardens of Alexandria. They are very beautiful and most artistically laid out. In summer time they must present a gorgeous appearance.

There is a Zoo of sorts, but nothing of particular note was to be seen except a fine collection of dainty Springboks.

News has come to hand that the 2nd South African Infantry (Natal and O.F.S. crowd) have

been in action. They left here some time ago for an unknown destination. They were promised a scrap, and strangely enough the promise was fulfilled. From meagre newspaper reports and well-developed camp rumours one gathers that our force bumped up against a large force of Bedouins and Arabs. After about a couple of hours' fighting the enemy retired, and we burnt their village. The casualties on our side were fairly heavy. To-day the 2nd Regiment are the envied ones of every member of the Brigade. "Lucky beggars to get a scrap. But why should the 2nd Regiment be first in the field? The 1st Regiment ought to have had that honour. Won't they just be bucked when we see them again! Just our rotten luck! We shan't see a scrap now. No hopes for us,"

says a pessimist. And so in various degrees and in divers fashions is the good fortune of the 2nd commented on.

“Oh, shut up, you whining, growling malcontents!” retorts the old campaigner. “What the blazes do you think you are here for? Just hang on, you young impetuous fire-eaters, and you will get more fighting than ever your wildest dreams could make you long for. This is not a German South-West touch.”

“Take what comes your way, and don’t miss anything,” is an axiom which old campaigners believe in following out. There is nothing so uncertain as time spent on active service. Fixed in a place for weeks on end, with no prospects at all of a move, a few hours may see the place you were encamped on bare and lonely, tents,

men and traffic spirited away, as if suddenly transported by means of a magic carpet. Thus, when it became possible to obtain forty-eight hours' leave to visit Cairo there was no paucity of eager applicants.

One can do a lot in forty-eight hours as regards sightseeing, and those who did manage to secure leave were lucky, for within twenty-four hours of granting the leave a move had been ordered, and Mex was left far behind as a memory connected with incessant training and stringent duties.

There were three in our little party: the Major—a real major in every respect, with a corporation a Falstaff might envy, and an exterior which overawed everything. Speaking confidently, the Major's fighting weight was

just exactly 267 lb. avoirdupois. Then there was the junior captain, quite a nonentity, by the way, as all junior captains are. The third member of the party was the senior subaltern, commonly known as the ostrich. He was supposed to have hollow legs, and rumour had it that he put a lot of tucker necessitated by a ravenous appetite into these receptacles. Thin, gaunt, and always hungry—these were his chief characteristics.

A pleasant three hours' railway journey, and a capital lunch *en route*, brought us to Cairo. There was some difficulty about getting hotel accommodation, but consoled by the homely title of "Hotel Bristol," we swallowed the seeming dinginess and possible discomfort, and took up our abode at this caravanserai. We

were charged eight piastres for a bath, and soap seemed to be a scarcity ; still we were very comfortable.

Cairo is quite a big city. It boasts lots of fine buildings and palatial hotels. Its electric tramway system is first class, and pays, so I am told, a yearly dividend of twenty-five per cent. An Egyptian military band was playing in the gardens the day we arrived, and the "Gyppie" *jeunesse dorée*, in military and civilian costume, were present in large numbers. For the most part they seemed a weedy and conceited crowd, but what they lacked in physique they certainly made up for in scholarly appearances.

Lots of footer and boxing would do them a power of good, and give them a different outlook

on life altogether. There was far too much of the covert and deceitful in their looks and actions, and a total absence of the public school boy or young undergraduate's healthy thought and action.

The streets of Cairo smell evilly, and filth is a welcome guest apparently, so long as it does not show itself too boldly. In the evening we visited a variety entertainment, which was quite presentable. As in Alexandria, everybody dines late, and this meal generally takes well over an hour. Entertainments generally commence about ten o'clock, and finish about 12.30 a.m. The Major made a notable conquest at dinner. Two padres (military) had sported two Red Cross nurses for dinner. They were seated close to our table. The girls ate their

meal modestly and soberly, as befits sisters of charity when entertained by officials of the Nonconformist Church. The Major's imposing presence and basilisk eye, however, upset the equanimity of one of the sisters, who possessed a wicked glance, and a violent flirtation raged whilst fish, entrée, and joint were served. We had a job to get the Major away when dinner was over, for by then he had lapsed to the mildly poetic, and insisted on presenting his fair charmer with an appalling doggerel, without rhyme or reason, laboriously scribbled on the back of the menu. A lingering and affectionate glance bestowed on my own unworthy self, as the Major's inamorata skipped coyly out of the dining-room, nearly caused a breach of the peace. Trouble was however, averted by a

firm assertion on my part that I never encouraged or looked for such flippancies.

We were up early the next morning. By nine o'clock we had secured a guide and a two-horse cab. The Major wanted a one-horse vehicle, but I refused on humanitarian grounds. First of all we visited the Sultan Hassam Mosque. This is one of the oldest mosques in Cairo. In it the famous murder of the 500 Mamelukes took place. It was a grand, rugged, old temple, very little used now, but remarkable for its colossal size and solidity. Our guide had a lot to say about this temple of the heathen, but his English was not of the best, and in all probability he was telling lies by the furlong. We nipped across the road and visited the El Rafai or Coronation Mosque. The usual formality of

putting slippers on had to be gone through, and more baksheesh changed hands. The Major was unable to procure a pair of slippers large enough, and the delay and subsequent admonitions in English and Dutch bestowed on the kneeling servitor of the mosque must have been extremely unpalatable to the ears of the Prophet.

I am not going into any lengthy description of the Coronation Mosque. In the first place my knowledge of architecture is extremely limited. Secondly, it would need a pen of a Kinglake to do justice to such an edifice. Suffice it to say, the interior was superb, grand, and extraordinarily beautiful. There was no squatness, but huge colossal marble, alabaster, and granite pillars supported a roof of exquisite beauty and wonderful artistry. We saw enor-

mous columns of granite and marble from different quarries. In each has been inlaid large squares of marble of different colours and texture. We saw doors and huge gates of sandalwood, inlaid with mosaic work of priceless workmanship. Ivory and mother-o'-pearl patterns vied with each other in wonderful combination. In one part of the mosque the ceiling was covered with the most wonderful patterns in blue enamel, with lighting effect, which held one's gaze spellbound. It is hopeless to attempt any further description. Whatever one can say will only convey the smallest particle of what one would wish to impart. Of all the beautiful sights Cairo can provide, the Coronation Mosque stands pre-eminently first.

There was yet another to be seen. That was

the gorgeous Mahomet Ali Mosque in the Citadel. In richness and splendour this mosque stands probably first, but pride of place as regards impressive grandeur and nobleness of outline belongs to the Coronation Mosque.

The dome of the Mahomet Ali Mosque is beautiful beyond description. Our guide told us that when the architect had finished the interior of the dome, his eyes were put out by the then reigning Sultan, to prevent him from designing another dome like it.

We left the mosques and their slender and wonderfully modelled minarets, their internal sumptuousness and priceless treasures of workmanship and art, convinced that with all their traditions and riches they could not compare with the most humble of our own churches

For a mosque has no spiritual individuality. It is like a shell without a kernel. One looks round vaguely for something on which to focus the attention, but there is nothing.

Our guide took us next to the "dead city." This is the Moslems' cemetery. The dead departed are here interred in a kind of sarcophagus round which is built a house. None of the houses are, of course, inhabited. We drove through long, narrow streets, with all the houses presenting a desolate and forlorn appearance. High walls covered a lot of these dwellings of the dead. But one was able to catch fleeting glances through barred windows and half-open gates of the peculiar coffins, very much like a huge Saratoga trunk, in which the dead had been deposited. Some of the houses were of

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beautiful architectural design, complete in every external accessory and detail of the Oriental domicile.

We met few living persons, and they for the most part were gravediggers (so our guide told us). It was all very morbid and dismal. There must have been thousands of houses in this particular quarter, all dedicated to the dead. There was very little reverence shown in anything appertaining to this burial ground, and one almost felt sorry for those who were encased in their clumsy-looking, brick-and-mortar receptacles, surrounded by dismal walls in ruinous nakedness.

We met a couple of funerals on their way to place yet another inmate in his or her assigned spot. Four natives carried a bier on their

shoulders. They were preceded by a motley crowd of men walking at a brisk pace, and unconcernedly chanting a weird dirge. More followed behind. There was a total absence of decency about the whole thing. To get the corpses away as quickly as possible seemed to be the main objective. Of mourners there appeared to be none.

We visited the tombs of the Mamelukes (500 in number), and also the royal tombs. These are the powerful show items of the dead city. The former were of historic interest only. The latter reminded one of merry-go-rounds, of the tinsel and silver trumpery incidental to a circus, and of gaudy coloured barbers' poles. There was one gorgeous tomb among the lot, that of a Sultan. It had cost one and a half

million francs, so our guide said impressively, and seemed disgusted that we did not in the least show surprise.

There is a subtle distinction in the matter of sex in all these tombs. At the foot and head of each sarcophagus is a pillar. If a man is buried there his sex is denoted by a fez carved out of the pillar. If it is a female who sleeps the long sleep, amid all these gaudy and cheap surroundings, a replica of her tresses has been carved on the pillar at the head. Some of these ladies must have had wonderful coiffures, judging by the fantastic shapes and colourings the artist bestowed as a lasting memento of the long-departed crowning glory of the women there. The whole thing may, of course, have a deeper meaning, but our guide, probably shocked at

our infidel levity and flippant remarks, offered no explanations.

We left the dead after paying more baksheesh and cursing a crowd of importunate beggars out of existence.

If you want to see medieval and modern times mingling together, go to the bazaar in Cairo. It is the most wonderful sight you can possibly imagine. One could spend hours in this particular quarter and still be far from satisfied. Somehow a glamour is thrown over you. You live as if in a forgotten age. You drive through one populous street, where motors, cabs and transport vehicles pass and overtake each other. A turning of the street brings you straight into a period only read of in "Arabian Nights" or cleverly portrayed on the stage. The Cairo

Bazaar could well be included as one of the seven wonders of the world. Here is still reserved a portion of ancient times, unchanged and true to its traditions in the time when our own civilisation was hardly dawning. Here you find the money changer, stolid and dignified. There is the water seller, with the large black beast's hide slung across his back, plying for custom. In a quiet corner of the narrow, dirty street is the letter writer with his quills, parchment and heap of white sand at his side. Wares of every description are exposed for sale. Amber necklaces, costly carpets, some of them worth a king's ransom, silk goods which would make a woman delirious with joy, mosaic work of such skill and artistry which almost seems incredible, and yet one can see it in process of manufacture.

On every side you are invited to come and inspect and bargain. These salesmen and saleswomen would be worth their weight in gold to any employer. You are regaled with coffee and cigarettes, and then you haggle: that is a part of the business. Somehow you become hypnotised as from remote and dark recesses of the small alcove, which serves for a shop, the most ravishing treasures are extricated for your inspection. Buy you must. You feel you are bound to agree with the soft persuasiveness and candid argument of your dusky tempter. He is leading you along pleasant paths. Your sense of greed is uppermost. The fascination of the serpent is on you, and you buy far more than you can afford. I had no money to spend in the bazaar, and I therefore refrained from useless bargain-

ing. But I never remember having felt so envious as I felt then. I wished I had £500 to spend. It would not have gone far, but I should have been able to explore and inspect some of the wonders and riches of the East, and perhaps to have possessed a few. As, however, none of them were to be mine, I left with a heavy heart, regretting that riches had not fallen to my lot.

I would have lingered yet longer among these quaint surroundings, but two appalling sights made me change my mind, and I fled precipitately. Both were beggars clamouring for assistance. One was a young girl, wasted to nothing but skin and bone, with a diseased eye which decency prevents me from describing. The other was an ancient hag who, as I turned

round to see what she wanted, pushed a gruesome face close to mine. The nose was completely gone, and in its place was a lump of clay. The woman leered horribly. Feeling sick, I cleared.

IT was during lunch that the Major somewhat tersely explained to the Senior Subaltern and myself that, despite his dignified majorical build and rotundity of body, he was as good as any of us—nay, better, much better when there was anything doing. The Subaltern, with innocent mien and an envious look at the depleted lunch table, murmured, “Yes, sir; it seems like it.”

This caused a heated argument, in which the Major had all the say and the Subaltern all the sorrow; for the Major’s tongue was keen as a razor, and his withering references to “lean,

long images of useless slabs of humanity," to "people with ostrich-like capacities for anything eatable," and other glowing references, left his adversary a humbled but wiser man.

"I tell you two young devils," roared the Major, purple in the face, "if you can climb pyramids, so can I. If you can ride donkeys and camels, so can I. I have never been beaten by anybody yet, and, by gad, I won't be beaten by you !"

We heartily agreed and peace was once more restored. That afternoon had been reserved for the Pyramids of Giza, of which the Sphinx and the great Cheops pyramid were the outstanding features.

We boarded a tram, which, after about an hour's journey, took us straight to the Pyramids.

Our guide procured donkeys for us, but although the Egyptian, like the South African kaffir, has little or no mercy for his beast, all of them refused to allow the Major the privilege of a donkey ride. We tried a camel, but the unfortunate animal made such righteous remonstrances when the Major was seated and so absolutely refused to move, despite curses and kicks, that the promised experience of a brief trip on the ship of the desert had to be abandoned also. About twenty minutes' walk in deep sand brought us to the foot of the great Cheops pyramid, which is 425 feet high. To our right in the near foreground was the Australian camp.

All around the pyramid was an unending crowd of soldiers, donkeys, camels, shrieking

natives, and a few sight-seeing Red Cross nurses. Our guide first took us up to see the Sphinx, immortalised by Kinglake's *Eothen*. Curiously, I felt disappointed. All my previous conceptions of this huge piece of sculpture were modified. The Sphinx somehow had lost its inscrutability and mysticism in its surroundings. Sand dunes hid it from view and belittled its alleged magnificence. Its face was shapeless. Its dignity was non-existent. There was an offending note of sordid commercialism and cheap show about the whole thing which made one both sorry and annoyed. We visited the temple of the Sphinx and admired the wonderful symmetry of the huge granite blocks of which it was built, and its marvellous construction.

Looking towards the great pyramid, there

was an unending stream of tourists, mostly soldiers, crawling up the stereotyped tourist route. They looked like a thin stream of ants.

The outer covering of the pyramid had long since been removed and used to build mosques with. Once these pyramids were smooth and impassable on the outside, having been covered with a kind of cement. Now the great Cheops pyramid looked bruised, tattered and torn. One layer of huge stone blocks had been removed, and it is now comparatively easy of ascent. The pyramid still retains part of its outer covering, a portion of it having been left near the summit.

The Major was keen on taking the proper tourists' route. I objected strongly. "Hang it all, Major, there is a chance of a bit of climbing

now, and I am going to have it. We will take the opposite corner for our ascent and descend by the general route. Of course, Major, if you think the other way is easier, you can take it; we won't mind."

The Major muttered something impolite about "conceited humbugs," but fell in with my views. The ascent is by no means difficult to those who are fit and do not object to looking down from a height. It is practically a matter of going up a huge staircase, the steps of which vary from three to five feet in height. If you want assistance, there are plenty of natives who will help you. They do so in parties of three, one to each hand and one pushing on behind. The senior subaltern and myself declined any assistance. We climbed half way,

the perspiration oozing out of every pore, and waited for the Major. He was a long time coming. His advent was heralded by loud screaming and fierce imprecations in Arabic. At last we got our first glance of our friend. He was slowly being hauled up from one high stepping-stone to another. There were six Arabs hard at work. Four of them grasped his hands and two pushed with all their might behind. The Major, his coat and helmet off, was being slowly dragged along and upwards. He reached a sitting position and gasped for breath. His heavers, hot and angry, chattered volubly. Half of them were for giving up the job and going down again, but the Major, grasping the gist of the conversation, rose with a wicked glint in his eye. He seized hold of

the nearest two and knocked their heads together. "What the h— are you laughing at?" roared the Major, as he caught sight of his two companions. "I'm going to get to the top of this charnel house, if I bust! Come on, you sons of Satan, and get a move on." Once more the laborious ascent was commenced. The natives this time ceased their screaming. They adopted the more dignified method of hauling up their weighty customer by organised rhythmic chanting. We dared not stay longer to witness the raising of the Major; it would have been too much for his equanimity and ours.

We reached the top and waited patiently. At last he arrived. He had kept his word, but his assistants were in a state of collapse. Even the question of "baksheesh" seemed to have

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been forgotten. The descent was easy. To a mountaineer it was particularly so. You simply had to jump from step to step, being careful, of course, you did not stumble or miss the place you were making for. The Major came down slowly and surely. With him it was a question of sliding in a sitting position. His progress was careful and dignified.

Having reached the bottom, we decided to explore the interior of the pyramid. Unfortunately for the Major, the entrance was not large enough to admit his bulk. He made several attempts to enter, but it was not to be. Had he, by dint of special wriggling and adjustment, managed to get through, he would never have come back again, for the interior was tortuous, winding and narrow. We slid through

the small opening. Two guides accompanied each. We found ourselves in a narrow shaft at an angle of about 45 degrees. The shaft was of solid granite, it was as black as velvet and as slippery as glass. The only light we had was a guttering candle carried by the guide.

Having reached the bottom, we crawled through a small hole cut in the stone. This brought us face to face with a rugged granite wall about ten feet high. By the light of the spluttering candle the guide pointed out foothold and handholds. We scaled the intervening obstruction and found ourselves on a platform, from which a narrow granite passsge shot upwards for about 300 feet, at a perilously steep angle. The bottom was polished and

very slippery. Here and there steps had been cut in the glistening surface, but these had long since been worn away. The only way to get up was to grasp the hands of your two guides and hope devoutly that your feet would not slip away from under you.

The atmosphere became denser and closer and the heat more oppressive. We reached the top of the narrow symmetrically cut passage, and found ourselves in a queen's burial chamber. It was as dark as in a grave, but the candles gave us some idea of the huge vault with a large sarcophagus at one end. There were a couple of small air shafts in this chamber, and they were badly needed.

We were hot, sweltering with perspiration, half-choked with foul air and dirt-begrimed,

but the downward descent had to be accomplished quickly as time was getting on.

The safest and surest method of getting down was to sit and slide gently downwards.

Other explorers were continually coming up, and at times it was exceedingly difficult to effect a crossing.

At last we reached the entrance, and once more breathed the fresh, cool air. The experience had been one well worth having, but the inconvenience and the rush made it anything but a pleasure.

We found the Major outside with a dozen clamouring Arabs round him. All of them wanted payment. All of them, so they said, had served him in some capacity or other. The Major cleared them all to one side and watched

his two fellow sight-seers emerge from the pyramid entrance. It was his turn to laugh now. "You look as if you had enjoyed yourselves," he chortled. "Devilish good time, eh? Seems as if the exercise was a bit too much for you. That's the worst of being out of condition."

We looked at him but vouchsafed no reply. Our only regret was that the Major had not been with us.

EIGHTEEN hours in a North Sea trawler, even if the voyage is done in times of peace, is not altogether a voyage of comfort or pleasure. I found myself one hot, dusty afternoon alongside one of the numerous dock arms in Alexandria harbour in charge of sixty men. Our destination was a small harbour some hundred and fifty miles along the western coast of Egypt. The trawler was already well loaded with military stores and medical equipment. There was very little accommodation for passengers anywhere, but the soldier of to-day has developed the philosophical mind. He

takes what comes along, be it good or bad, with stoical indifference. He knows that he has got to do his job, be it pleasant or unpalatable, and he knows it is always best to do it cheerfully and uncomplainingly. Happily one can always find a big proportion of humour in everything, if you look for it.

We stowed ourselves away on the deck where best we could. Some preferred the stern of the boat, others made their beds on a coal heap. A few ferreted out nooks and corners among tents, tarpaulins, and field-ambulance accessories. By the time the hawsers were cast loose, every available bit of deck space had been occupied. Each man had his own length and breadth to revel in, and that was about all. I found a place forward among

some military cycles and prepared for the night.

As soon as we had passed the breakwater our trials commenced. The little craft rolled as if she had a painful internal complaint. The wind howled and shrieked. The sea became rougher and rougher, and by way of variety our vessel pitched and tossed, groaned and shrieked, as if in constant protestation against the load hoisted on her. Frequently the waves leaped on board, as if anxious to complete the night's discomforts. It became bitterly cold, and a couple of squalls were encountered.

The men stuck it well; a few were sea-sick. On the whole, they enjoyed the boisterous weather. Some hot water was obtained from the

trawler's galley, and tea was made that evening and the next morning.

The crew of the trawler (it even boasted a small gun, built on a massive platform) were mostly young men of the Naval Reserve. They had watched our men coming on board with that gloating satisfaction so common in human nature, when one appears at a disadvantage before others. No doubt they expected a large proportion of the passengers to be as sick as the proverbial dog. In that, however, they were doomed to disappointment. There were not more than eight at the most, who, with glassy stare and a heaving back, tried to explore the depth of the Mediterranean, and they received scant notice or sympathy from their comrades.

We sighted land about seven o'clock next

morning. At eleven o'clock we had run the gauntlet of the narrow entrance to the harbour of Mersa Matruh. This entrance is fraught with considerable danger, as exemplified by a stranded trawler, which had missed the entrance, ran ashore on a sand-bank, and was now slowly being smashed to pieces on the sea-shore.

We passed a mine-layer, a destroyer, and a huge monitor in the shallow, lagoon-like harbour. Ashore there was a large coast-guard station facing the sea, a big mosque inland and a village, now long since deserted, round which the military had taken possession.

And here we have now been in residence for about two weeks. This place is not without its historical interest; it boasts the ruins of a fine Roman villa, now unhappily being utilised

to provide blockhouse material. Mersa Matruh was once upon a time the watering-place of Antony and Cleopatra. Probably the Roman villa belonged to them. Sponge fishing and the cultivation of barley, which latter is of unsurpassed excellence, were its principal industries. A small settlement of Egyptian officials, Greeks, and Turks used to live here, but everything is now in the hands of the military.

The place is strongly fortified, and, luckily for us, there is an enemy—a real enemy—to be contended with: so General Sir John Maxwell told us as we landed. He seemed much impressed with the physique and bearing of our men, and after an appreciative survey murmured, “Thank goodness, they are men.”

We have led a very uneventful existence since

our arrival here ; water is scarce, and some days we have had to do with half a gallon per man. Bully and biscuits, a little bread, and occasionally fresh meat, provide our daily ration, but there is plenty of jam, cheese, and vegetables.

The sea-bathing is luxurious, and the troops take every advantage of it. The sea is as clear as crystal, and the bottom smooth and soft.

We have done a good deal of training and long marching, preparatory to the work which is ahead. Sport has not been lost sight of, and is generally encouraged. Soccer encounters between the Naval and Military factions are of frequent occurrence. Some Rugby matches between the South Africans and New Zealanders have taken place. In both codes good

play was seen. The New Zealanders defeated the 2nd S.A. Infantry seventeen points to nil. But the 1st Regiment avenged their countrymen by beating the All Blacks by nine points to three, after a keenly contested match.

Outpost duty is taken in turn ; training and discipline is not relaxed, but goes on as usual. Rather hard on the men ? Yes, but it is necessary. It is only training, and lots of it, which makes the soldier, and South Africans must not be second, even to the best troops. At least, so thinks our General, and it will not be his fault if we are.

Have just finished one round of outpost duty. The change was agreeable, but I wish it had not been my lot to be stationed in one of the now deserted houses. It was quite a

pleasant and roomy building, but, oh, the fleas !
Two large bottles of collodion, which we found,
and half a bucket of disinfectant, sprinkled all
over the common-room had no effect. Oriental
fleas are worse than vampires.

IT has taken our little Expeditionary Force just a month to clear the coast of Western Egypt, and, so far, our job is finished. I am writing this at the journey's end, Sollum, a distance of about one hundred and seventy miles from Mersa Matruh. It is a glorious day. The sea is of that perfect blue which is only found in the Mediterranean. There is a welcome breeze, lots of water, plenty of food, and a more than satisfactory contemplation of the immediate past, and the near future. A lot can be done in a month with a small force, composed of all arms, especially when it is well

handled and everybody is keen. One may, therefore, perhaps be pardoned if the proportionate sense is sometimes obliterated by the extensive after-survey. To all of us our little job has been a very real thing. It has been with us constantly for a whole month. We have endured a good deal, achieved something very creditably, and have come out of it hardened, proved and accredited first-class troops, fit for any work, and worthy companions in arms to England's best.

I want to say quite a lot about this little affair on the Empire's outposts—firstly, because the South Africans played a very big part in its ultimate conclusion; secondly, because the expedition is well worth recording; and, thirdly, owing to its frequently highly romantic turn,

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which will always appeal to the imagination and to one's pride of race.

It is impossible to chronicle everything that happened, but I hope this brief survey will convey some idea to the many thousands who have watched and waited for its completion of what had to be contended with and of what was accomplished, and how it was done.

We left Mersa Matruh on February 14—we, that is, the 1st Regiment of the South African Infantry Brigade, a battery of the Notts R.H.A., some mounted men (Yeomanry—Dorsets and Bucks), and other details. The country we traversed was alongside the sea, gently undulating, with shrubby vegetation, very much like parts of the Free State. On the whole, going was

good, although in places large patches of stony ground had to be traversed.

The column, small as it was, presented an imposing sight. All transport vehicles had been discarded. Everything was being carried on camels, of which we had about eight hundred with us.

They make splendid transport and we could certainly not have got on without them. All along our route we came across refugee Arabs and Bedouins. A number of them were armed with firearms of a weird and ancient design. These were all carefully gathered in and made prisoners.

One day we came across a number of native bodies. A fight had evidently taken place, and those who had fallen were left for carrion

meat, and food for wild dogs and jackals. We also found the body of a white man, evidently a sailor, washed up by the seashore. A Christian burial was given him.

We reached a place by the name of Unjeila on the 16th, which was speedily put into a state of defence. Here we remained until January 22nd. Our time was fully occupied with trench digging, building sunguards and fortifications, training, etc. The weather was not pleasant. It generally blew during the day time and was bitterly cold at night. Sometimes it rained heavily, and without tents life was not altogether as pleasant as it might have been.

Our stay at Unjeila terminated on the afternoon of the 22nd, when we trekked a distance of three miles to where the 3rd Regiment of

the S.A. Brigade, which had come on behind us, had camped. We stayed there for the night and moved off next morning, again along the seashore, and after a good march reached the village of Zowiat Shamaas. There we found splendid water and a glorious sea beach, both of which were made the most of. The next day provided a fourteen-mile tramp across shockingly bad country, composed of loose sand, long stony stretches, and continuous undulations.

The men felt the march keenly. The day was hot and parching, and water very scarce.

Shots were exchanged on our left flank during the march. At night when we camped we expected to be sniped by the enemy. This, however, did not happen.

We pitched our camp that afternoon at Maktil.

The position assigned to us was an excellent one from a defensive point of view, and afforded plentiful cover and protection. We were, in fact, camped on the sea beach. A beautiful little cove provided a sumptuous bathing-place. Large lime and sandstone mounds covered our right and left flanks.

Orders were issued that no one was to show himself on the sky-line as the enemy was close by in considerable force. In fact, his camp could plainly be seen, by the aid of a telescope, from our observation post.

Apparently the enemy was building a gun emplacement. Outpost duty that night had a tinge of excitement in it. At last we were getting to grips with the enemy. The morrow might even bring forth a fight.

We rested at Maktil on the 25th. Nothing had happened during the night vigil, but when it became daylight there was a lively fusillade on our front. A small patrol of mounted men dashed out. The firing increased, and shortly after the mounted men returned at full gallop.

On the far ridge of the horizon we could see moving figures. They were the enemy. It was not long before our outposts were sniped, and throughout the forenoon many shots were exchanged.

Our water had to be obtained from wells some distance outside the outpost line. This quickly attracted the attention of the enemy, who sniped to his heart's content. Water-carts, with their spans of mules and attendant fatigue parties, afforded excellent targets. A good

number of shots fell in between the wells, but no one was hit. There was an air of suppressed excitement in camp all day. It was evident that the enemy had been located in force, and that he would probably have to be cleared out.

Just about four o'clock in the afternoon orders were issued that the column would move at dark. It would march all night and make an attack on the enemy's position at dawn. Evidently an enveloping attack was to be carried out.

LITTLE had been heard or seen of the enemy during the afternoon, but just about tea-time he again made his presence known to us. The sun was just setting, when the distant boom of a gun was heard. Soon the peculiar wheezing sound of a projectile was heard, followed by an explosion in the middle of the camp. Another followed, and yet another, and still one more. Then, for the matter of forty minutes or so, two 12-pounder guns made things lively.

The black devils had the range fairly well, but their shells were badly timed, and did not burst.

Quite a number went into the sea. Very little damage was done, the net result being one man killed and a couple wounded. The shell that killed the man dropped among a dozen men, but did not explode. In its flight, however, it hit its victim in the face, death being instantaneous. The alarm was soon given, and with perfect order the troops rallied to their various alarm posts.

Our own artillery had in the meantime got going, replying strongly to the enemy's guns, but these were never silenced, and kept up the bombardment until darkness set in.

We were told to advance in extended order to clear the ridge in front of the guns. This ridge was about 3,000 yards away. Soon the infantry streamed forward, taking up a very wide front.

Darkness, however, set in, and direction had to be found by means of the stars and a compass bearing, taken just before it got too dark. It was real Egyptian darkness by the time we had got well under way.

The firing had ceased long ago, but we might at any moment have bumped into the enemy. Once to our right front we heard shouting and jabbering in Arabic. Then desultory shooting was heard. We continued the advance, but no guns were found. No doubt they had been moved under cover of darkness. At last we got the order to halt and dig ourselves in. A couple of miles had by then been covered.

Quickly the entrenching tools were got to work, sentry groups posted and picquets detailed. Those not for duty burrowed well into

the ground for the night, now bitterly cold and the wind piercing and boisterous. We had no blankets, and our uniforms were not warm. The vigil was a long and cheerless one.

About 1 a.m. a pale and watery moon crept up and shed a feeble light on the tired and shivering lines of outposts and supports. Dawn was hailed with satisfaction, for smoking was permitted. The rising sun was greeted with a cheer. Soon the order came to return to camp, where a hasty breakfast was speedily prepared.

We learnt that the enemy had moved his position six miles further inland, and that it was intended to march about 9 a.m. to attack him.

THERE was a muffled air of expectancy as the column marched out on the morning of the 26th February, 1916. The day was hot, water was scarce, and the road, such as it was, dusty. Nothing had been said about an impending engagement, but the manner in which the column advanced gave every indication of ultimate action.

We—that is, the infantry, 3rd and 1st S.A.I.—advanced across a huge plain in lines of platoons in fours. The Yeomanry (Dorsets) had long since deployed ahead and were tiny black dots on the far horizon. The guns (a battery of the

Notts R.H.A.) for a time were with the main body. On our flanks were the armoured cars under the Duke of Westminster. On striking the Khedivial motor road, the only road in these parts, we were joined by a number of motor ambulances. Overhead our friend the aeroplane was making rapid tracks to where the mounted scouts had disappeared over the sky line. It was a magnificent sight to see the force advancing in battle array, over country which was perfectly flat as far as the eye could reach. The infantry platoons looked like darkish cardboard squares equidistant, moved steadily forward, with now and then a brief halt.

All of a sudden the artillery got a move on. The long line of guns and men slid forward at a brisk trot. Enveloped in a

yellow cloud of dust, they disappeared from view.

By that time we had left the coast line far behind and had cut inland, almost in a southerly direction. Two dull thuds as if from an explosion reached us, after we had marched for a couple of hours. Shortly after the aeroplane came buzzing back. Evidently he had located the enemy, and had dropped a couple of bombs.

The artillery had now reached the summit of a gentle rise and were preparing for action. Soon they were in full swing with long range shrapnel fire. As yet there were no signs of the enemy.

The infantry kept on advancing steadily, ready to deploy at a moment's notice. Gradually the country became undulating. The infantry extended, and compact line after line topped the

low rises and disappeared from view, to be followed by what seemed like an unending succession of other lines.

We reached the guns, which had taken up a position close to a small stone kopje on our right flank. We advanced beyond them, they keeping up a steady bombardment over our heads. It was not long before the enemy artillery started to reply. Apparently they had two guns of small calibre. One devoted its attention to our right flank, and the other to our left. In turn they tried hard to reach our guns, but the effort was rather too much for them, every shell falling short. Eventually they devoted their attention to the advancing infantry, but very little damage was done. All the shells on our right exploded, but never found a mark. Those

on our left did not explode, but buried themselves with a dull thud in the ground. As a rule they overreached their mark by hundreds of yards.

It was not long before the enemy was encountered. , About 1,500 had taken up a position to our left flank in some large low-lying sand dunes, covered with a coarse bush. It was a fine position from a defensive point of view. An abundance of cover was to hand, and retreat could easily be accomplished.

The lie of the land made it difficult for the armoured cars to come to actual grips, but as usual, enterprise and dash found a way, and although a couple of the cars got stuck in the loose sand, they made it pretty hot for the numerous skulking Arabs and Bedouins.

The infantry had by this deployed into skirmishing order, and although subjected to a harassing and violent fire from maxims and rifles, advanced steadily.

It was splendid to see line after line sweeping onwards. Perfect lines and exact intervals were kept. This was where stout training and strict discipline told its tale.

At times a heavy toll was taken of the oncoming troops, but where gaps were left in the lines these were quickly made up.

There was no hurry or confusion. Apart from the rattle of musketry and the staccato tapping of the maxims, the whole thing might have been a parade movement executed for the edification of a General.

The firing line had already absorbed its sup-

ports and reserves, and gradually the enemy gave way, not without making a bold resistance, however.

Sometimes the fire was so hot that an advance was impossible. When such an exigency occurred, cover was taken, jokes were cracked, and bantering language indulged in. Then, when there was a lull, the "held up" portion would suddenly rise, rush forward with a ringing cheer, get to the summit of a sand dune in front, which provided for fire effect, and belt rapid fire into the retreating enemy.

From behind, line after line followed in almost unending succession. The left flank encircled the sand dunes, and the enemy completely gave ground and fled.

The firing became fainter and fainter, and

just as the last line of the general reserves were merging themselves into the firing line the order to cease fire was given.

In the meantime the Yeomanry had worked round the right flank. A long brown line was suddenly seen on the top of a rise far away to the right. They were riding hard, those yeomen. For a moment they seemed to halt on the crest. Then they wheeled sharply to the left and were lost to view.

IT was high time the infantry were given a rest. The advance had been over difficult ground from the time the enemy came within range. Many men had shed their packs to be less encumbered in the event of a bayonet charge. Water was as precious as gold. None was to be had, and the bottles had long since been emptied. It is at such moments that an unrelaxing discipline is indispensable.

The rest given, however, made up for many other deficiencies, and for the time exhaustion, heat and thirst were forgotten in the exchange of views of the action just concluded. Excite-

ment was still running high, and many were the tales and experiences of hairbreadth escapes.

A number of the enemy had been left on the battlefield, but nothing like the number that was expected.

During the advance several wounded Arabs were found lying behind cover sniping at the oncoming troops. One could not help admiring the tenacity of these dark-skinned fanatics, but no quarter was given them. Some of them died hard and the bayonet was resorted to.

In one case, where a wounded sniper was caught in the act at point-blank range, half a dozen rounds did not still his hatred. One sergeant thereupon rushed the writhing mass of humanity and bayoneted him. Sufficient vitality was, however, left in the riddled man to seize the

bayonet in both hands and with a mighty effort he drew it out. He expired immediately afterwards.

While the infantry are resting, let us go further afield and see the final tableaux of the action, in which the yeomanry played the principal part. The enemy had scattered and fled. His camels and horses had been loaded up, and his main objective now was to get his transport away safely.

The enemy's position was surrounded by a rise some three miles away. Long before the evacuation his main convoy and guns had topped that ridge and descended into a long flat plain, which again sloped gently upwards towards the far horizon.

Some of the infantry had penetrated a ridge

a little beyond the enemy's original camp, and had taken up a covering defensive position, in the event of a counter or flank attack.

Far away and out of rifle range, the plain was dotted with hundreds of swiftly moving camels, their leaders and escort. It was their intention to reach the far ridge, still several miles away, where probably they could be covered by means of a rear guard action. Had our guns been present, they would have wrought indescribable havoc and damage.

It seemed as if the last of the convoy would get away unmolested, when something appeared on the right flank which looked uncommonly like mounted men. It was the Yeomanry. They came over a small rise in the plain in a long unbroken line. They rode hard, did those

yeomen from Dorset, straight for their objective, in a fashion which would have done credit to a Regular cavalry regiment. The enemy spotted them and got their maxims into action, while the escort scattered, took cover, and awaited developments. These were not long in maturing.

The Yeomanry had extended appreciably, and when within rifle range a murderous fire was opened on them. Out flashed their swords, revolvers were loosened in their holsters, and with a ringing cheer which could be faintly heard in the far-away infantry positions the charge was made. It was an inspiring sight, and made the onlookers' blood tingle in their veins. Nearer and nearer thundered the dark line in face of a well-directed and accurate fire. They

were out on business and nothing would stop them so long as life and horseflesh held good. They made straight for the maxims and the prostrate enemy.

Then the charge found its objective, swords gleamed in the sweltering sun. It was thrust, flash and parry. No quarter was given and none was asked for. Soon everything was enveloped in a brown cloud of dust, from out of which galloped those who had survived the encounter.

There were numerous hand-to-hand encounters, and it was the man with the clear brain, sure eye and steady arm who won the day. Some of the Yeomanry were caught unawares by the enemy, who, as soon as he saw his antagonist coming for him, dropped flat on the ground. Not being equipped with lances, the

sword had to be used on the waiting, prostrate Arab. In cases where the effective thrust was not given the tables were turned. The Arab rose, and as his adversary thundered past, shot him in the back.

But the charge put the crowning glory on a good day's work. The enemy fled in disorder and panic. It was each man for himself and the devil take the hindmost.

Several important prisoners were captured, including the Senussi second in command. Fifty camels loaded with dates, representing the rations of the entire force for ten days, also fell into our hands, besides machine guns, ammunition, and many other prisoners.

The Yeomanry lost, I think, sixty-four all told—viz., thirty-one killed and thirty-three

wounded. It was a heavy toll, but the glory was theirs. They had died in a charge which will stand alone as one of the most dashing exploits in the Egyptian campaign. It was an effort which will be put down for all time to the dash, spirit and soldierlike qualities of the gallant Yeomen of England.

THAT night volunteers from every regiment in the force were asked for to go out and look for the wounded still left on the Yeomanry's battlefield. The infantry had had a hard and gruelling day's work, but volunteers willingly came forward and proceeded on their work of rescue.

Far away in the blackness of the night could be seen the lanterns of the search parties. Many hours were spent in scouting the ground, but no one was found. Evidently the exact spot had been missed in the absence of anything to direct those in charge. When daylight broke,

however, that which had been lost was found. Nearly three dozen killed were found where they had fought to the last, and gloriously fulfilled all that was expected of them. They had done their duty well, and no man could do more.

During the night marauders had taken off their clothes and left the bodies naked. They were reverently put together, and during the course of the day buried in a large common grave.

This depleting the dead of their garments, equipment, etc., was always practised by the enemy.

After the fight with the 2nd Regiment the enemy dug up our dead and took all clothing off them. They needed clothes and, therefore, helped themselves as best they could.

It has been stated that the Senussi indulged in mutilation of the dead bodies. That is

incorrect. In not a single instance where our dead were deprived of clothing, etc., was anything done to their bodies.

The remainder of our dead were also interred in a common grave, dug close to the battlefield among the sand dunes. All their clothing was taken away. The bodies were reverently placed on a layer of wild desert flowers, placed at the bottom of the grave. Blankets were laid on top, and thousands of beautiful wild flowers strewn over them. They all had a Christian burial, and rest peacefully and honoured among the vastnesses of the Egyptian frontier. They sleep the long sleep of those who have done their appointed task cheerfully and well. Their memories are beacons along the path of toil and strife. Their end is cheerfully awaited by every good soldier.

WE will leave our comrades to their last long sleep and press forward with the living to the end of the task.

We left the next morning at daybreak in a northerly direction, once more heading for the sea.

We marched until about one p.m., and then camped at Sidi Berani, a shelled, burnt, and deserted coastguard station. This was occupied, and here we remained for about ten days, being joined by the remainder of the 1st S.A. Infantry Brigade, more mounted men, a mountain battery of Indians, and other details.

Our destination was Solum, the coastal headquarters of the enemy, about thirty miles from the Tripoli border. This place was also a German submarine base. It was reported that an ammunition factory was there. We expected a big fight, for the country was mountainous and the enemy stubborn.

Bag Bag was reached on March 11th. This was another deserted coastguard station, surrounded on the north side by white low-lying sand dunes.

On Sunday, March 12, we had the worst march of the whole time we had been trekking. We left Bag Bag early and were on the march by 6.30 a.m. It was a glorious day, but excessive heat was indicated. We advanced across an immense plain, making for what at first

looked like a low-lying ridge on the far horizon.

The marching was hard, and as the hours were reeled off the heat became oppressive. During a halt we were told what was expected of us.

The enemy was holding the most important pass on a high escarpment round Solum. If this had to be taken by a frontal assault casualties would obviously be heavy, and the fighting sanguinary. It had, therefore, been decided to split our force into two columns; the 2nd and 3rd Regiments, with the cavalry, the guns, camels, etc., would make for the sea, probably diverting the attention of the enemy from what might take place elsewhere. It was the duty of the 1st and 4th Regiments, with the Indian mountain battery, to take the ridge ahead of us.

It was our task to get on top of the plateau, to advance towards Solum, to attack the enemy in possession of the pass, to drive him off, and thus allow the free passage to the top for the remainder of the force.

The particular spot we made for was, of course, a long distance from the enemy's position.

The armoured cars, had, in the meantime, worked round the left flank, had found a way to the summit of the five hundred feet high plateau, and, as a matter of fact, were there long before the infantry arrived at their destination.

We halted for half an hour at midday, having covered about fourteen or fifteen miles. The low-lying ridge above had developed into a long, continuous ridge of rock furrowed by

deep gullies. It was a magnificent defensive position.

As far as the eye could reach to the left this escarpment bounded the horizon, gradually sloping away to the plain below, about forty miles away.

To the right it loomed higher and higher, terminating in a decided right-looking spur. Beyond that it seemed round, making a short turn towards the sea, and then bending inwards, formed the Bay of Solum. This, of course, was not visible.

THE men were allowed to leave their packs behind to be taken up afterwards by camels. The distance to be traversed did not seem great, but distances in a tropical country are deceptive. We advanced in extended order, the Scottish leading. We expected a fight, and if the enemy had disputed our progress with a few maxims and well-distributed snipers, he would have made things the reverse of pleasant.

The traversing of the intervening plain between our resting-place and the escarpment occupied two hours.

Arrived at the foot of the ridge, the last ounce was squeezed out of the men. They had had an exceptionally hard march, their breakfast had been a meagre one. Their water bottles had long since been emptied, and there was not a hope of getting any more. Lots of men simply collapsed from sheer exhaustion. They had no interest in anything, and simply threw themselves down in a semi-conscious state. Still the stream of men went slowly upwards.

It took some time to reach the top, where gradually the stragglers joined their companies. Rest was given, and with the filling of the water bottles recent troubles were forgotten.

The contemplation of the task just completed proved a happy ending for the trials and hardships of the day.

The passage of the troops to the top of the ridge had been terminated successfully. The armoured cars were out on patrol duty, and the road to Solum was open.

We rested the following day, and the rest given was very welcome indeed. The only fly in the ointment was the scarcity of water. Two pints of water per man for drinking purposes is not an extravagant ration per day, when men are thirsty and the weather exceedingly hot. The water which was given us had been medicated with chlorine against possible disease, and tasted vile, but it was the most sumptuous drink we had ever had, only there was not enough. Had there been a plentiful supply, without any control exercised over its distribution, the men would have drunk themselves sick.

Only those who have known what it is to be really in need of water know what it is to suffer from thirst. It is when your lips have been parched black by the sun and dust, when your tongue cleaves to the roof of your mouth, when your throat feels like a hollow sand pit, that existence becomes wearisome, and thinking a monstrous obsession.

I saw native camel drivers catching the urine from the camels and drinking it.

Some of our men even went so far as to drink the contents of their rifle oil bottles.

Slight relief was given by digging for certain roots which contained some kind of moisture, and eating them. But it was a poor substitute for the liquid necessity.

We marched again that evening for about

four hours. We had to make for the pass held by the enemy, but the chances of an encounter had diminished very considerably.

In the cool of the evening the thirst fiend did not make himself felt so much.

Patiently and silently the men pushed forward, their trials minimised by the cool evening breezes, and the hope of another water ration at the end of the march.

Some men, unable to stand the strain any longer, became light-headed and delirious, and had to be sent to the rear for medical attention and supervision.

On our left flank the armoured cars, ten in number, guarded the column.

In the blackness of the night, silhouetted on the sky-line, they looked like grim, silent

destroyers, gliding noiselessly over the huge expanse of sand covered stone loven and sandy waste.

In a long line extending from front to rear of the column they would halt while a few minutes' rest was taken. Then, purring softly, they would push ahead once more. Sometimes they would be lost to view, but they were never far away.

WE bivouacked that night a tired, pathetic and indifferent crowd, longing for sleep and forgetfulness of our craving for water. Another water ration was, however, issued. Each water bottle three-quarter filled was received by its owner as if its value was beyond human calculation.

That night the support sentries saw a big blaze towards Solum. It was at first thought that the Navy was bombarding the place. Later we ascertained that the enemy, finding out that he had been outwitted, had blown up his ammunition stores and supplies and had cleared.

A short march the next morning brought us to the pass which had been held by the enemy ; its name was Nagb Girabala. Here we camped for the day. During the march an aeroplane soared overhead and dropped a message, which was to the effect that the enemy had blown up his ammunition and stores, and cleared westwards. Later we learned that the armoured cars had immediately started in pursuit and encountered the enemy some distance from Solum. He was rapidly clearing out with camels, guns and transport. True to tradition he showed fight. A gun was got into action and he proceeded to shell the cars, but this proved abortive.

As the retreating enemy was holding his ground, it was decided to charge him with the cars. This manœuvre was soon executed and

the ten cars in line, with their maxims beating a merry tattoo, did great execution. About 200 of the enemy were killed. Two guns and 11 maxims were captured, in addition to 300,000 rounds of small arms ammunition.

Several Turkish officers fell into our hands, and general havoc and panic set in among the enemy, who fled precipitately, leaving everything behind.

One camel, evidently loaded with powder or petrol, was seen to completely disappear in a loud explosion, after the armoured maxims had got the range.

This was a most satisfactory ending to another eventful day, and when the cars reached the camp in the evening their crews were loudly cheered and made much of.

The next day we marched to Solum.

WE passed the position held by the enemy which had proved no use. There were abundant signs of his hasty departure.

About half an hour's march brought us once more in sight of the sea. Below us was the bay of Solum, the most perfect bay I have ever seen. In the harbour were several gunboats, destroyers, and a large number of trawlers.

Our descent from the plateau took a considerable time. We had to proceed in single file along narrow bridle-paths, over loose rocks and rubble. The path wound round, in and out of

a deep and precipitous gorge, and one had to be careful of one's foothold.

At every turn were signs of a large camping place. Fires, rags, old tins, and innumerable snail shells marked where the enemy had had his last night's repose and early morning breakfast.

At last we reached the seashore and proceeded towards our camping ground. Ahead of us, on the top of the escarpment and overlooking the bay, was a large white fort. Below on a spur jutting out into the harbour, were several houses of a dilapidated appearance. A ramshackle native village, composed of wood and canvas huts and a few large yellow stone houses, completed the settlement.

Like everything we had struck, it was primitive, dirty and dusty. But the bonny blue Mediter-

anean smiled and beamed upon us, and the fresh sea air made us forget the trials and hardships we had just overcome.

We were met by General Payton, who had commanded the column, just as we were nearing our bivouac. He was alone, and rode along the column, taking the salute from each platoon.

“Well done, men ; you have done exceedingly well. Thank you, I appreciate your work most heartily. You have had some damnable experiences and you have done extraordinarily well. Thank you, men, thank you indeed.”

These were the kind and thoughtful remarks passed by the commander. They cheered the men strongly and were greatly appreciated. Every man stepped out more jauntily in spite of his heavy load and the heat.

A little appreciation goes a long way to brighten the life of the soldier on active service—at the best a hard and cheerless one.

We camped and made ourselves comfortable. Bivouacs were erected to keep off the sand and wind. The native village disappeared rapidly, being transferred piecemeal to the brigade's camping ground. Quickly the entire village had disappeared. We had an issue of rum, and for the first time for many nights we enjoyed sleep, unhampered by care and responsibilities.

THERE is only one more item which needs relating, and then my storehouse of information is exhausted. That is the romantic capture of the ninety-one prisoners of war from the cruiser *Tara*.

It will be remembered that this vessel, which was a mine-layer, was submarined by the Germans and her crew handed over to the Senussi authorities at Solum. They had been in captivity for about three months, and, according to all accounts, had a very rough time indeed.

Shortly after we got to Solum it was decided to effect their release. Once more the armoured

cars under Major the Duke of Westminster were requisitioned. They were accompanied by a large number of motor ambulances, wagons and motor cars. It was understood that the prisoners were about 150 miles inland.

One fine day this motor flotilla set out upon their quest. A guide had been procured who said he knew the place where they were, but he had not been there for over twenty years. However, his services were accepted, and the fate of the ninety-one prisoners hung on the slender thread of a Bedouin's loyalty and memory.

For a matter of seventy miles or so the going was good. It was desert country, but the cars covered the distance easily. Then all of a sudden the guide changed the course. Hitherto it had been westerly, now it was changed to south.

Another fifty miles or so, and the place of captivity had been reached.

The rescue party found a well, and by it were found the prisoners ; and their guards, on seeing the approach of the armoured cars, cleared.

The unfortunate captives were almost reduced to the last stage. They were burnt black, they were clad in rags ; unkempt and unshorn, starving, and with every shred of hope almost gone, they presented a sad sight. Their attenuated frames and tottering walk was pitiful to behold. They could not believe that their hour of deliverance had come, and when the bright and sure reality dawned upon them they almost went mad with joy. They crowded round their deliverers, they laughed and wept.

A large number of them completely broke down.

For days and weeks they had lived on nothing but dates and snails. Occasionally a ration of rice had fallen to their lot.

For three long and weary months they had endured hardships and suffered such as falls to few.

Some of their original number succumbed to exposure and starvation.

Those who still lived were practically reduced to a state a little above that of an animal.

Food was the first consideration, and of that a liberal quantity had been brought along. Then they were placed in the ambulance cars and a speedy return to civilisation was made.

On arrival at Solum they were taken to a

hospital ship which was waiting in the bay, and transported to Alexandria.

Among the relieved prisoners was an aged sea-dog. "I will never, never again deny the power of prayer," said he in conversation. "For weeks and weeks all seemed hopeless. We did not think help could ever come to us, but somehow we could not give up hope. I prayed daily, and I found comfort in that. Surely God could not leave us to die in the desert! But our prayers were heard. I knew all along they would be, and here we are to-day free men. It is just wonderful."

They told us that on the whole their captors treated them well. Occasionally, however, their women jeered at them. That they did not get better food could not be helped, for their guar-

dians themselves had nothing better to sustain life.

The rescue party had a difficult and dangerous journey; for forty-eight hours they had only about two hours' sleep; but whatever they had to contend with found its reward in the result achieved.

The prisoners left one living memento with their rescuers. It was a dog—a very miserable and sorrowful specimen of canine life he was, and no wonder! His short span of life had been troubled and uncertain. In his youthful and puppy days he had been rescued from a burning vessel outside Alexandria. He had then been transferred to the *Tara*. He was on board when she was torpedoed, but was saved only to fall into the hands of the Senussi and to eke

out a meagre existence on water, dates and snails. Poor little beggar! His captivity had aged him beyond his years. Too much tragedy altogether had been crammed into his short life. One of the maxim gunners hauled him out of his warm bed in one of the cars. "Come on, Paddy, my boy, and see the gentleman," he said, lifting an indifferent white-and-black nondescript specimen of dogginess towards me. Paddy was placed on one of the cars. "We have rechristened him Paddy, sir," said my informant, "but he does not seem to answer to the name." Then he told me about the adventures and vicissitudes of his pet. Paddy sat like a prematurely old man, his head bent forward and his eyes closed. "Well, old boy," said I, scratching his head gently, "you've had

a rough time ; but good times are in store for you now." Paddy opened his eyes, surveyed me reproachfully for a few seconds, sighed deeply, and returned to his mental contemplation of things not easily forgotten. Perhaps he had not realised yet that deliverance was accomplished. Perhaps he was mourning for his master, who in an afterwards-to-be-regretted fit of generosity had given him away. Perhaps he pondered on the frailty of human nature and his narrow escape from having to provide something for the sustenance of his fellow-prisoners. Who knows ?

WE are on the eve of departure for the “front of all fronts.” To the majority of us the aspect is an acceptable one, for is not the Western front the great ideal of every soldier who loves his country and hates the Hun ?

Our new sphere of operations will include a kind of warfare as yet foreign to all of us. But the South African is a creature who possesses enterprise to an unusual degree and who is able to accommodate himself to practically any circumstances. Besides, we have seen enough of deserts to last us for a long time. Then there

will be real work to do—work with the bayonet, glorious bombing and like adventures. These will repay one for the sometime dull monotony of trench warfare and make one feel that, like thousands of other brave fellows, we have participated in the fiercest and bloodiest phases of the present war, besides having endured the exacting conditions of campaigns where the joy of battle has not always been the prime compensating factor.

We have been inspected by the G.O.C. in Chief in Egypt, Sir Archibald Murray, who paid us the highest tribute as yet given us.

When addressing the Commanding Officers of the Brigade he said he had seen both old and new troops, regulars and volunteers, but in physique there were none who could be compared

to the South Africans. At Bordon we had secured for ourselves a splendid name. Under General Maxwell that name had been enhanced in Egypt. He reminded us that we had a big reputation to live up to and he felt sure that reputation would even be greater in the future.

“I don’t know what division you will go to in Flanders,” he said; “but I am writing to Sir Douglas Haig, and telling him what stuff you fellows are made of. I wish you God-speed and every success in your new surroundings.”

And thus the first chapter of the 1st S.A. Infantry Brigade is closed. We leave Egypt proud of the fact that our little job has been successfully completed, and that we have earned the gratitude and praise of those in authority. Prouder still that we are South Africans, and

that, as her sons, we have helped a little towards the upholding of that liberty and love of fair play which is the inherited birth-right of every colonial, whether such by adoption or birth. We know that if we have done well in the past we shall do better in the future. We know that the people of South Africa will expect great things from us, and although the cost to be paid may be a heavy one, we feel that the lives given willingly in this war are not given in vain. Best of all, we have the assurance that when the Motherland called to South Africa for her sons to take their places in the ranks of the Dominions' armies, there was no delay, no conscription, and no evasion on our part.

And so I conclude this brief and incomplete

record of the South Africans' progress through the lean lands of Egypt. It has been compiled at odd hours and under many varied conditions. Whatever its deficiencies are, its motive has been a justifiable one—viz., to furnish a link with our loved ones in South Africa, and to tell them briefly what we did and how it was done.



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